23: Wissler E-4,5 (1902-ca.1911) 1918
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old men on the west side of the center pole dance in their places. The rawhide held in front of them, hangs down like an apron. They beat time on it, holding the rawhide in one hand, and the rattles in the other. An old man counts deeds and marks out with a knife the fireplace and the booth for the weather dancers. These are dug while the dancing and shooting take place.[1]

The hole, or fire pit, is dug between the sun-pole and the entrance to the dancing lodge. It is about three feet by two and "two hands" deep. A warrior is then called to start the fire. Warriors now come forward in turn to count their coups. In this a man took a piece of firewood and holding it up, called out in a loud voice how he once struck a Sioux, a Snake, etc., then placed it in the fire. When he had recounted all he gave way to the next. Stories are told of men having enough coups to make a fire large enough to threaten the destruction of the dancing lodge. We were able to confirm the statement of Clark[2] that the height of the flame as determined by a buffalo tail hanging down was the criterion for determining a great warrior. One informant states as follows:—

There is always a cow tail hanging down from the center post. In olden times this was a buffalo tail, to the end of which a blackened plume was tied. This hangs down over the fireplace which was used at night to furnish light for the proceedings. The assembled people were entertained by narratives of warriors as they came forward to narrate their deeds; each threw a stick on the fire for each deed counted and he whose fire blazed high enough to reach the tail was considered a great warrior. It was a great honor when a man could tell enough war deeds to scorch the tail. All this time there was singing (the cheering songs) and drumming, while berry soup was served to all. The persons taking part are designated as those "who are about to make the fire." In recent years, this ceremony has been performed in a very perfunctory manner.

After the ceremony, the fire was fed in the ordinary way and kept going during the greater part of the succeeding days. The origin of this dance is often ascribed to Scar-face.

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[1] It will be recalled that in the sun dance of the Dakota type (p. 110) there is a ceremonial shooting at the sun pole. Here the shooting takes place in a perfunctory way, while the pole is dragged to the sun dance site. Yet, McQuesten claims to have witnessed the driving of evil power from the sun lodge at a Blood ceremony in 1912. ("The Sun Dance of the Blackfeet" *Rod and Gun in Canada*, March 1912.) As this is not noted in older accounts and we failed to get information as to it, we suspect it to be due to foreign influences, or perhaps the author's own interpretation.

[2] Clark, *ibid.*, 72.